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The Right to Freedom

The Bulletin of the Human Rights Centre "Viasna"



Way to Recognition

Issuing our first number four years ago we didn't think that we would manage to continue for so much time and come up to the 100[th] number. First of all, we thought that human rights violations in Belarus wouldn't go on for a long time, and secondly, that they wouldn't be so diversified as to present enough interest to readers. Nevertheless, neither of our hopes has come true.

One of the main reasons that inspired the publication *The Right to Freedom* was that none of the human rights organizations published regular human rights editions, limiting themselves by several numbers only. Human rights violations needed to be understood, fixed and put in order. At present *The Right to Freedom* remains the only regular human rights edition that deals with this task.

It's a pity that the volume of our bulletin doesn't allow us to give more space for elucidation of the dramatic and sometimes even tragic events connected with suppression of democracy in Belarus, persecution of public and political activists, prohibition to carry out professional activity, violations of the rights of believers, children, women, violations of the media rights. Some of the people who live near us direct these events. We intend to increase the volume of the edition and devote more space to the complicated fates of our compatriots, as there's nothing more important for the journalists of our bulletin than life of ordinary people. We try to help them with the printed word if we can.

For this time *The Right to Freedom* has acquired its own circle of regular and active readers both in Belarus and abroad as the bulletin is issued in three languages. Our readers are the source of our strength and inspiration.

I congratulate and thank all the journalists, translators, authors of *The Right to Freedom* and all the people without whom the edition of the bulletin would be impossible.

Alies BIALIATSKI.

Holiday Tastes Bitter

There are both merry and sad anniversaries...

Issue of the 100[th] number is the first important holiday in the life of every edition. Daily newspapers celebrate it less than in half a year since the time of their appearance. We have been waiting for it four years already. Why do we feel not only joy, but sadness as well? We have spent years watching the human rights situation in Belarus and have to state that the situation is getting even worse...

Since late 1997 till early 2002 we have been going along an unbeaten track, full of hopes and disappointments.

It has been the road from the liquidation of the newspaper «Svaboda», to the closure of another one, «Pahonia», the road from the first criminal cases for «graffiti» to the present ones for «insult to the President», the road from the changes in the Belarusian Constitution to the full disregard for it.

Dictatorship draws its power from the constant elimination of the human rights. It is an axiom whose proofs can be found in the contemporary Belarus. Presidential decrees in our country are superordinate to the Constitution. Elimination of human rights by such decrees is not a Belarusian invention, but it is used here most actively.

That's why, however sad it is, we have to say that during these four year Belarus hasn't been going to the Liberty of Speech and the Liberty of Spirit, but moving away from them... That's why human rights activists and the journalists of *The Right to Freedom* have much more work to do than four years ago...

Andrei NALIVA.

"THEY TREATED US VIOLENTLY..."

EVIDENCE OF THE PERSONS DETAINED AT ACTION OF LOVE ON FEBRUARY 14

On February 15 a number of youngsters detained in Miensk during *Action of Love* and who spent the night at the detention center in Akrestsin Street, applied to the Human Rights Center *Viasna*. They solicited for advocatory service at Savietski Borough Court where they were taken, that's why the trials were postponed to the next week. Here are the excerpts from the applications of the youth action participants ...

Zmitsier Dashkievich: «I was detained near the stadium of Belarusian State Polytechnic Academy together with S. Ivashkievich. He can witness that a police colonel was beating me (nobody told us his surname in the Savietski Borough Board of Internal Affairs (BBIA). They treated us violently in the BBIA as well: I was chained to a radiator, the colonel beat me in the face, trampled my legs, insulted, threatened to beat. He beat S. Ivashkievich in the face as well. We were kept at the BBIA since 4.30 p.m. (the moment of detention) till 11 p.m., then were taken to the detention center in Akrestsin Street. Then they treated us better, but gave no food and 11.30 a.m. next day took us to the court.»

Siarhiei Hierasimovich: «...They kept me at Savietski BBIA till 3 a.m., then said to sign the report of detention, where I was accused of participation in an unauthorized action, usage of unregistered symbols and crying out anti-State slogans. When I refused to sign it, they started to threaten me with trouble at my university and didn't let me go to the lavatory... At 11 p.m. they took me to the detention center in Akrestsin Street together with 5 detained and 2 under-aged persons... Workers of the detention center treated us fairly well, but refused to feed us in the morning...»

The under aged ***Artur Finkievich*** was detained in Varvashenia Street, not at the time of the action. In his application he wrote: «We came out of the BPF quarters together with ***Siarhiei Kastsiukievich***, crossed the Street, came up to a car with 6 people in. When they saw us, they opened the door and we passed them two copies of congratulations on the St. Valentine's Day. At that time another car came near, 2 people in plain clothes ran out of it and pulled us into the car. They didn't tell their names and didn't ask us for any documents. In 5 minutes we were at Savietski BBIA. There they composed a report for violating Article No. 167. The juvenile delinquents inspector Sviatlana Nikitsina wrote that I had been detained in Darashevich Street, didn't react to the requests to stop the illegal actions, etc. From this report I found out that I had been detained by the police lieutenants Hadyniets and Kumahiertsyn. At 8.50 p.m. my mother came who refused to sign the reports and only wrote: «I have come to take my son home, but don't agree with the report».

MAXIMAL SENTENCE

RESULTS OF THE TRIALS AGAINST THE PEOPLE, ARRESTED ON FEBRUARY 14

On February 18 Miensk Savietski Borough Court tried some participants of the celebration of St. Valentine's Day.

Siarhiei Hierasimovich was fined 40 minimal salaries.

The report against **Vasil Parfiankou** was sent for improvement.

The trial over **Andrei Kazlou** was postponed to February 10 in connection with the absence of the police witnesses.

On February 19 Savietski Borough Court considered administrative cases against **Zmitsier Dashkievich** and **Paviel Sieviaryniets**. Judge Axana Reliava decided to fine Zmitsier Dashkievich 35 minimal salaries, the leader of the Young Front Paviel Sieviaryniets – 300 minimal salaries, which is the maximal fine for the violation of the second part of Article No. 167.1 of the Code of Administrative Infringements of the Republic of Belarus (CAI RB).

On February 20 Savietski Borough Court continued trials over the detainees.

Vasil Parfiankou was sentenced to 10 days of administrative arrest by the terms of the second part of Article No. 167.1 of CAI RB.

Andrei Kazlou was fined 25 minimal salaries.

LAUGHTER IN COURTROOM...

IN SHKLOU DISTRICT COURT THE CONTINUES CONSIDERATION OF THE CRIMINAL CASE ON "INSULT TO THE PRESIDENT"



The trial that started on February 13 is the first consideration of case on the 1-st part of Article No. 368 in the history of the law machinery in Belarus.

The Prosecutor's office accuses the local activists of the *Zubr* movement Mikhail Kisialiou, Maxim **Patupchyk, Alies Paulovich, Dzianis Sienakosau, Zmitsier Shalashkou** of insult to the president. The accused can be imprisoned for up to two years if found guilty.

On August 14, 2001 activists of the Shklou branch of *Zubr* put funny masks on their faces and went to shops, meeting with electors.

The police stopped the performance as the moustached masks reminded them of the Presidential candidate Aliaxandr Lukashenka and took five *Zubr* activists to the Shklou Town Department of Internal Affairs. A mask, a photo camera and T-shirts with the symbols of the *Zubr* movement were confiscated. Two detainees were released at 1 a.m. because of their minor age. The police composed reports registering violation of Article No. 156 of the Code of Administrative Infringements ("disorderly conduct") by the adults, who also had to spend the night in the cells.

On August 15 the local administrative court acquitted the detainees. However, on the following day a criminal case was initiated by the terms of the first part of Article No. 368 "Insult to the President of the Republic of Belarus" (this article was introduced by the new Criminal Code that was enforced on January 1, 1999. The independent experts immediately characterized the former as an additional means of political pressure (especially in connection with the Presidential campaign. For instance, in 2001 a criminal case by this article against five Barysau citizens).

All in all, five criminal cases were initiated by the terms of the first and the second parts of Article No. 368, one against a Rechytsa citizen and four concerning publications in the independent press. Unlike a usual insult, where for initiation of a case it is necessary to have a suit, in the case with Article No. 368 the Prosecutor's office defines whether the Presidential honor and dignity have been insulted without any suits and then initiates a case...

On the first day of the trial in Shklou Judge Khaladtsova decided to postpone the further consideration to February 26 because a witness had fallen ill, in spite of the will of the Prosecutor Aldonava and the advocates of the accused to continue it.

(continued on page 7)

Links Become More Varied and Grow Stronger

PA HRC "Viasna" at the International Stage

For the six years of intense human rights activity Public association Human Rights Center Viasna has established contacts with a large number of international human rights organizations. It is necessary to maintain wide cooperation with the foreign human rights activists in order to distribute the information about human rights violations in Belarus and influence the country's government with the assistance of such international bodies as OSCE and UNO.

«Belarus Update»

There are several directions of cooperation with the international human rights organizations. One of the most important ones is information dissemination. PA HRC *Viasna* sends to the foreign human rights organization its bulletin *The Right to Freedom* that has been issued in Belarusian, English and Russian since 1998. At the international human rights conferences I have heard many good comments on our bulletin from human rights activists of the former Soviet republics. We receive letters of gratitude from many countries, varying from the Republic of Tuva to Australia. In one of the letters the human rights activists of the Komi Republic wrote that they read the bulletin *The Right to Freedom* with pleasure as it didn't only provide them with information about the situation in the distant Belarus, but also taught to fight for their rights, including the own national and cultural values. We feel glad when human rights editions of foreign countries reprint our materials. Almost every number of the electronic issue of «Belarus Today», prepared by Institute of Human Rights (Russia) uses *Viasna* information.

Internet is another bridge that unites *Viasna* with the international community. Since 2000 Human Rights Center *Viasna* has regularly updated its web-site www.spring96.org. The information in the Internet is presented in three languages as well. Thanks to the web-site the information about human rights violations in Belarus quickly spreads across the universe. One can find regular references to the information of Human Rights Center *Viasna* in the monthly electronic issue «Belarus Update», distributed by the International League of Human Rights. It is very important for us as the International League of Human Rights is an influential international organization with the advisory status at the UNO. The yearly *Review-chronicle of Human Rights Violations in Belarus* also plays a great role in the informational cooperation. The *Review...* is sent to the Embassies and foreign human rights organizations.

Participation in the international conferences and hearings on human rights is probably the most important direction of cooperation with the international human rights organizations. In 200 PA HRC *Viasna* prepared an alternative report for the UN Committee against tortures and other kinds of violent or inhumane treatment. As a result the Committee adopted quite strict recommendations to the Republic of Belarus concerning observation of the undertakings upon the Convention against tortures and other violent kinds of treatment of citizens.

Direct Contacts

Direct contacts with the foreign human rights organizations, participation in educational human rights conferences is another direction of cooperation with international human rights organizations. Since 1998 *Viasna* has actively cooperated with the well-known Swedish NGO «Svenska Freds» (Peace and Arbitration Society). Since 1999 we have carried out joint projects with this influential organization. Last year 10 Belarusian citizens took part in the human rights school in Sweden on the invitation of our colleagues there. For the two past years we have established cooperation with other two Scandinavian organizations – Swedish Helsinki Committee and Norwegian Helsinki Committee. We also highly value our fruitful and close relations with the Center of Civic Education «Poland-Belarus» in Bialystok». We have carried out many joint seminars and conferences thanks to which Polish society knows about the real situation with the human rights in Belarus. Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights is another old partner of *Viasna*. Our members have taken pat in the human rights schools organized by Marek Navitski and his colleagues. We also maintain traditionally close contacts with the Czech organization *People in Need*. In August 2000, after the scandal connected with the deportation of the journalist and member of *People in Need* Mikhal Plavec», I participated in the public watching of the film concerning the problem of people's disappearances in Belarus in Bratislava. This film caused great interest among the Slovakian journalists and activists. After the end of the film Mikhal and I answered the numerous questions of the present people. This film, *Belarus in Stalin's Shade*, was produced by a Czech journalists and was the real cause of Mikhal's deportation from Belarus to Czech.

(continued on page 4)





Iury Paliakou (on the right) Viasna supervisor at the election in Kosovo.

Valiantsin Stsiefanovich in Kosovo.

Members of "Svenska Freds" in Kurapaty.



LINKS BECOME MORE VARIED AND GROW STRONGER

(begins on page 3)

Membership in International Human Rights Organizations

In summer 2001 the mission of International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) to Belarus took place. Representatives of the federation met with Belarusian human rights activists, including members of PA HRC *Viasna*. Information of PA HRC *Viasna* was included into the report on human rights in Belarus on the results of the FIDH mission to Belarus. By the way, representative of the federation Philippe Calfayan proposed PA HRC *Viasna* join the International Federation for Human Rights, which is one of the first human rights associations in the world with the head-quarters in Paris, that unites organizations from more than 70 countries.

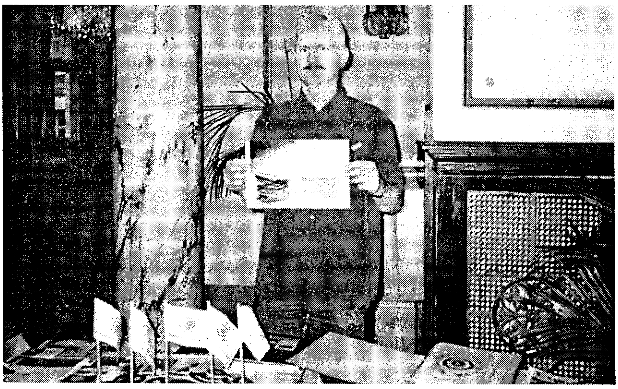
On February 16-21 I attended the regional international conference on the international criminal court. At the conference there were representatives from the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Lawyers from Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Germany and Poland acted as experts. The top issue of the conference was the establishment of the international criminal court and ratification of the international criminal code. Another issue was discussion of the principle of the universal jurisdiction, which is a new phenomenon in the international legislation with a short practice of usage. Nevertheless, some countries, for instance Belgium, have included the principle of the universal jurisdiction in their national legislation. It means that Belgium has the right to arrest criminals irrespective of where the latter ones have committed the crime of genocide or crimes against humanity and where they are living. Of course, this principle is very disadvantageous for the present dictators and military criminals. By the way, the conference discussed the questions of protection of human rights in Chechnya during the hostilities. Chechen human rights activists and advocates presented terrible facts of human rights violations in Belarus.

Shareable Experience

Viasna has maintained active contacts with the foreign human rights organizations during the last year's campaign of the independent monitoring of the Presidential election in Belarus. Several dozens of representatives of Russian human rights organizations, journalists from Poland, the Netherlands and Ireland took part in the election monitoring. As a result *Viasna* gained great experience of work in the conditions of the all-national monitoring campaign. It is the experience that can be transferred to other organizations dealing with the election monitoring, because the conditions of our work were much more complicated than in other countries of Europe.

In November five *Viasna* members were granted the opportunity to participate in the organization of the election in Kosovo. They were OSCE supervisors at the election of Kosovo Assembly, which was very useful and important experience of work in an international commission.

In September 2001 *Viasna* became one of the twelve founders of the international organization ENEMO – a European network of organizations dealing with the election monitoring. Among its founders there are also organizations from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Macedonia, Croatia, Albania and Romania. On February 21-24 In Beograd the second sitting was held. It devoted to the improvement of the internal documentation and discussion of the plans for the near future. In spite of the short term of existence, this network has good future prospects.



September 2001 – conference on establishment of ENEMO. Alies Bialiatski (in the upper photo) tells the conference participants about the activity of the Public Initiative Independent Monitoring.



Prospects and Priorities

On March 21-25 2001 in Kiev, at the conference «Geneva process in the XXIst century: from conflict to peace» PA HRC *Viasna* became a member of the working group of the CIS NGOs on conflicts prevention and resolution. The meeting was organized within the framework of the Working Group on Conflicts Resolution and Prevention of the Office of the UN Supreme Commissioner for Refugees. Another meeting in Kiev established the Assembly of NGOs of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, as well as the priorities of its work: enhanced networking, increased cooperation and communication through joint actions: specialized seminars, round tables, conferences. Implementation of these plans is fulfilled through elaboration and implementation of the joint regional and interregional projects within the Working group of the Non-Governmental Organizations of the Commonwealth of Independent States on conflicts prevention and resolution.

Wide international contacts of an association always confirm its industry and authority. We hope that PA HRC *Viasna* will strengthen its potential and will continue using its forces to promote human rights in Belarus.

Valiantsin STSIEFANOVICH.

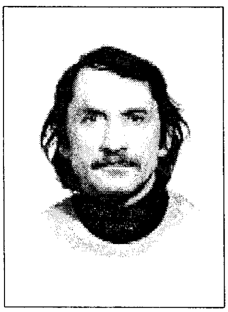
"Compassionate, Open-hearted People Who Are Incapable of Lying..."



**Linda ISAAKSON,
Forym SYD, Sweden:**

Forym SYD is the Swedish center of Public organizations. I deal with preparation of information about Eastern Europe there, putting it to an informational bulletin. Has known members of Human Rights *Viasna* since autumn 1998. At that time I was working in the public organization «Svenska Freds» (Peace and Arbitrage Society) in Stockholm. It was necessary for us to quickly find partners in Belarus. I remember pretty well my call to Alies Bialiatski. I told him about Svenska Freds and asked whether they wanted to cooperate with us. «Yes, surely!» was his answer. Soon we came to Belarus.

The acquaintance with *Viasna* has been very pleasant, interesting and useful. I am convinced that Belarus needs such organizations as *Viasna*. *Viasna* helps people and protects them. Such organizations support democratization of society and favor protection of the rights of each individual. It is very important that you gather the facts about the real situation with human rights in Belarus.



**Kanstantsin TARASAU,
writer and traveler:**

The only thing that lets me hope for changes for the better in our State is that we still have such fearless, selfless, compassionate, open-hearted people who are incapable of lying. Thousand of people who have experienced violations of their rights by the law machinery, the police mockery and were seeking truth will remember the members of *Viasna*, brought up in this very manner. Parents of the girls and boys who perished at the *Niamiha* subway pedestrian crossing will remember them too. The books about personal crimes of the authorities, issued by *Viasna*, have become a feature of the Belarusian life and greatly influenced the people's understanding of the newest history.

And the main thing– *Viasna* people make one feel confident. I respect and love them.



**Alies PUSHKIN,
artist:**

I will distinguish the most important from the complicated and diversified activity of Human Rights Center *Viasna*: members of the Center are chroniclers of our troublous times. They scrupulously gather the facts of violations of rights, real persecution of people for their public position, the real concerns of people in the contemporary life. *Review-chronicle of human rights violations in 2001* coexists with the laudatory speeches about the revival of economy and the excellent national policy of Aliaxandr Lukashenka and contradicts them. It is the document of the epoch that will stay in libraries, archives and the Internet. This review will remain the imprint and reflection of our time. And even in 50 years, when our descendants will study the «epoch» of Lukashenka's government, they will use these editions as documents... Here, among other ones, there are fixed facts of persecution and suppression of all that is independent and Belarusian.

Human Rights Center *Viasna* really helps people. My friend Andrei Aliakhnovich, a teacher by profession, was fired for the participation in the Presidential campaign. Human Rights Center *Viasna* supported him when he was in trouble.



Zinaida HANCHAR:

I made acquaintance with members of PA HRC *Viasna* more than two years ago, when my husband, Victar Hanchar, disappeared. I am very grateful to the members of *Viasna*, because they have done many good things for me and my family. I found understanding at Human Rights Center *Viasna*. It is very pleasant for me to come there – this is the place where I can hear the words of sympathy and support.

I wish all its members to be healthy, happy and continue their work. I know that I am not the only one who received help from *Viasna*, there have been many other victims of Lukashenka's regime to receive support there.



**Siarhiei TSURKO,
advocate:**

Such organizations as Human Rights Center *Viasna* are in great demand in our country. Why is it so? Almost everyday our citizens face the State's inequity to them and stay face to face with their problems. They don't receive support in the state institutions that are to protect the interests of citizens in accordance with the law. And Human Rights Center *Viasna* is the organization that can give support and does provide it.

(continued on page 7)

EVERYDAY WORK

REPRESENTATIVES OF PA HRC VIASNA ENJOY AUTHORITY AND RESPECT ALL OVER BELARUS

In Autumn 1999 there was registered tThe Republican PA Human Rights Center Viasna was registered in Autumn 1999. Now there are "Viasna" branches in all regional centers and the biggest cities of Belarus. Appearance of The network of regional representatives was established due to the vital necessity: violations of human rights happen everywhere in our country. If one knows the local situation, it is possible to influence the events. The work of the regional representatives is worse worth attention. This article is devoted to the activity of two of them.

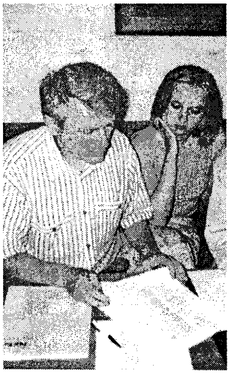
«Break of the ground» in Bierastsie

In February 2002 the name of the human rights activist Uladzimir Maliei was often mentioned in the press. He was sentenced to 15 days of arrest for participation in the picket, devoted to the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Most often the names of members of the Bierastsie Oblast Branch of PA Human Rights Center *Viasna* appear in the press in connection with their deeds, such as support to the relatives of the Zhabinka citizen who had died after being knocked down by the car of head of Bierastsie Oblast U. Dalhaliou. *Viasna* members have won a number of cases against the local authorities in connection with the groundless increase in prices for the city water and heating. This case drew attention of thousands of citizens, the press and OSCE.

Members of Bierastsie *Viasna* Branch deal with giving support to citizens. About 3 000 people have already applied to them. Uladzimir Vialichkin is the head of the branch. At the same time he continues teaching English at a secondary school. Uladzimir Maliei, who has been a member of PA HRC *Viasna* since 1999, deals with the juridical aspects of the cases.

In January 2002 a citizen who requested anonymity, applied to the Bierastsie Oblast Branch of PA HRC *Viasna* and passed to its members 93 filled but not sealed ballot papers on the election of the deputy of Bierastsie city soviet of deputies in the polling district No. 8 that had been conducted on March 18, 2001.

According to him, all this time he was feeling as an accomplice of the crime, committed by members of this electoral committee. He said that he had decided to apply to *Viasna* because of the principled position of its members during elections. Bierastsie activists think that it is a brave thing to do – «break of the ground» that will lead to new numerous testimonies of violations that had taken place at the Parliamentary and Presidential elections. As regards the 93 bulletins, the Prosecutor's office is dealing with them now.



Human rights activist Uladzimir MALIEI.



Chairman of the Bierastsie Oblast Branch of PA HRC Viasna Uladzimir VIALICHKIN.



The Candle of Mourning action in Bierastsie, devoted to the anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe.

For the years of the branch's existence the number of its members have grown up, groups of its members have appeared in each of the 18 districts of the Oblast.

The experience of *Viasna* work has shown that it was the low level of the legal education among the citizens of Bierastsie region that didn't allow them to successfully protect their rights, members of the organization started to hold round tables, developed informational and editorial activity. They issue the informational bulletin *Miazha* and monitor human rights violations in Bierastsie Oblast.

Barysau Citizens Are Interested Both in Life and Politics

Representative of Miensk regional branch of PA HRC *Viasna* Zmitsier Barodka has a university degree in economics, he has been involved in human rights activity since 1999. The reason was that there were no human rights organizations in the area of Barysau-Zhodzina-Krupki and it was difficult to use services of Miensk lawyers all the time. The Barysau human rights movement contains of the *Viasna* members and members of the regional branch of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee that maintain close contacts. For these years the policemen have had to get used to the fact that if they detain people after mass actions or other measures, human rights activists immediately appear at the police station.

However, most of the people who apply to the public office of the Barysau Branch of Human Rights Center come there because of usual, daily problems. For instance, the houses in Chernik haven't been supplied with electricity and water for a year. Nobody could help the citizens to solve this problem, though they have applied to different State bodies. At last they applied to *Viasna*. *Viasna* members have come to the settlement, composed a number of acts and seized control over the case. Now they help to solve the problem with every possible means.

The volunteers Iryna Paliadava, Alies Mirski, Siarhiei Ivannikau, Liudmila Shcharbakova do the

main work connected with the reception of citizens. They also attend different actions as observers, participate in trials as public defenders, etc.

One of the most recent application to the Barysau Branch of PA HRC *Viasna* is connected with the events of the last year: during the visit of A. Lukashenka to the Barysau enterprise *Auto-hydro-amplifier* ordinary workers who weren't members of any political body, started to ask «undesired» questions. After this the enterprise authorities started to pressurize these workers, Vasilionak and Zakreuski, regularly depriving them of perks and telling them to retire because of differences in the political views. Now members of the Barysau Branch of PA HRC *Viasna* are dealing with protection of rights of Ihar Zakreuski.

People have already started applying to *Viasna* in connection with the upcoming celebration of the 900th anniversary of Barysau. The authorities intend to conduct a large-scale festivity and therefore deduct thousand rubles out of each worker's salary. People who told us about this pressure said bitterly that they were patriots and would willingly give this money themselves if they were asked to do so, there would be even sponsors. People also feel anxious about the way the raised money will be used as there's no accountability to the people who have made their contribution.

The everyday problems with which human rights activists have to deal are a part of life in every part of our country. Our colleagues work for making our country democratic, legal and respectful of the rights of every individual.

Tatsiana REVIAKA.



Barysau. At an action, devoted to the anniversary of the Universal declaration of human rights.



"Compassionate, Open-hearted People Who Are Incapable of Lying..."

(continued from page 5)

People's interest in *Viasna* increases with every year. I have traveled on business to different towns and cities of Belarus. In 2001 there wasn't a single settlement where people didn't know about Human Rights Center *Viasna* to which people can apply in trouble. Not only ordinary people, but also State officials, workers of the Prosecutor's office of all levels, from the district Prosecutors to those from the General Prosecutor's office, knew about it.



Alieh VOLCHAK, Chairman of the human rights organization *Legal Assistance to Population*, Chairman of the public commission on search of the disappeared politicians:

To my mind, activity of Human Rights Center *Viasna* is necessary for our citizens. Our organization, *Legal Assistance to Population*, deals mainly with civic cases, *Viasna* defends those people who were persecuted for their political and public views. It is also very important that *Viasna* has the opportunity to issue the informational bulletin *The Right to Freedom* and the yearly *Review-chronicle of human rights violations in Belarus*. These editions witness existence of considerable problems with protection of rights in our society. *The Right to Freedom* gives many concrete facts: where the rights are violated, who has been beaten, who was judged with violations.

Viasna (*Spring*) is necessary for us as every spring that comes after winter. When spring comes, people start to feel better. We hope that real spring will come to Belarus as well, that our country will be democratic and the present authorities will have to bear responsibility for all their crimes.

Prepared by Palina STSIEPANIENKA.

Laughter in Courtroom...

(continued from page 2)

The only significant event of the trial was the refusal of the accused to testify because of the absurdity of the accusations. When the Prosecutor showed to the audience the "evidence" – a moustached mask in which she had recognized President Lukashenka, people started to laugh. One of the witnesses said that the mask reminded her much of her father.

On February 28 the consideration of the criminal case on «insult to the President» continued at Shklou District Court.

At the second sitting two witnesses testified. They had seen the performance at the *Haradziets* collective farm. They didn't tell anything that could be useful for the court. At the sitting advocate Paviel Sapielka solicited for psychological and artistic expertise. The court rejected the petition and postponed the trial to March 14.

Information Department of PA HRC *Viasna* on the base of *Nasha Svaboda* information.

BEGINNING OF HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT

People started to demonstrate their solidarity with political prisoners as soon as the information about the prisoners was given publicity. For instance, in the 1970-ies the Belarusian immigrants in New York held pickets in support of the Belarusian dissident, prisoner Mikhail Kukabaka. On November 7, 1990 in Miensk a populous anti-Communistic demonstration took place. A crown of the barbed wire was laid down to Lenin's monument in the present Independent Square, people hung a bag with empty bottles of vodka on his outreached hand – these were the symbols of the Communistic achievements in Belarus.

After this demonstration the journalist and pubic activist Valiery Siadou was arrested. Among my archive papers there's a document, a letter for contributions in support of V. Siadou. I think that it is worth the readers' attention, being one of the first human rights documents of our newest history.

Here's the text of the letter:

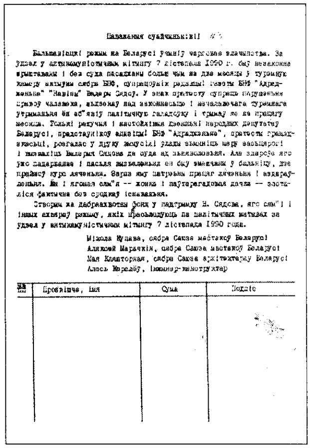
«Dear compatriots!

The Bolshevik regime in Belarus has committed one more crime. The active BPF member, a member of the editorial staff of the BPF newspaper *Naviny* Valiery Siadou has been iniquitously arrested and put to prison for more than two months. He went on hunger strike to protest against the violations of human rights, mockery of the law and inhumane treatment and kept it for a month. The authorities have released Valiery Siadou till the trial only thanks to the decisive and insistent actions of the deputies of Belarus, representatives of the oppositional BPF *Adradzhennie*, protests of the public and resonance in the press. After the hunger-strike the state of Siadou's health have worsened much, that's why he was taken to a hospital, where has undergone medical treatment. Now he needs continuation of the therapy. His wife, the fifteen-months'-old daughter and he don't have any means of subsistence.

Let us establish a voluntary fund in support of V. Siadou, his family and other victims of regime, who are politically persecuted for the participation in the anti-Communistic demonstration of November 7, 1990.

Mikola Kupava, member of Artistic Union of Belarus; Aliaxiei Marachkin, member of Artistic Union of Belarus; Maia Kliashtornaia, member of Architect Union of Belarus; Alies Karaliou, design engineer.

Surname, name sum Signature.»



Паважаныя суайчыннікі!

Бальшавіцкі рэжым на Беларусі учыніў чарговае злачынства. За удзел у антыкамуністычным мітынгу 7 лістапада 1990 г. быў незаконна арыштаваны і без суда пасаджаны больш чым на два месяцы ў турэмную камеру актыўны сябра БНФ, супрацоўнік рэдакцыі газеты БНФ "Адраджэньне" "Навіны" Валеры Сядоў. У знак пратэсту супраць парушэньня правоў чалавека, здзекаў над законнасьцю і нечалавечага турэмнага утрымання ён аб'явіў палітычную галадоўку і трымаў яе на працягу месяца. Толькі рашучыя і настойлівыя дзеяньні народных дэпутатаў Беларусі, прадстаўнікоў апазіцыі БНФ "Адраджэньне", пратэсты грамадзкасьці, розгалас у друку змусілі ўлады зьмяніць меру засьцярогі і вызваліць Валерыя Сядова да суда ад зьняволеньня. Але здароўе яго ужо падарванае і пасьля вызваленьня ён быў змешчаны ў бальніцу, дзе прайшоў курс лячэньня. Зараз яму патрэбны працяг лячэньня і аздараўленьня. Ён і ягоная сям"я -- жонка і паўтарагадовая дачка -- засталіся фактычна без сродкаў існаваньня.

Створым жа добраахвотны фонд у падтрымку В. Сядова, яго сям"і і іншых ахвяраў рэжыму, якіх пераследуюць па палітычных матывах за удзел у антыкамуністычным мітынгу 7 лістапада 1990 года.

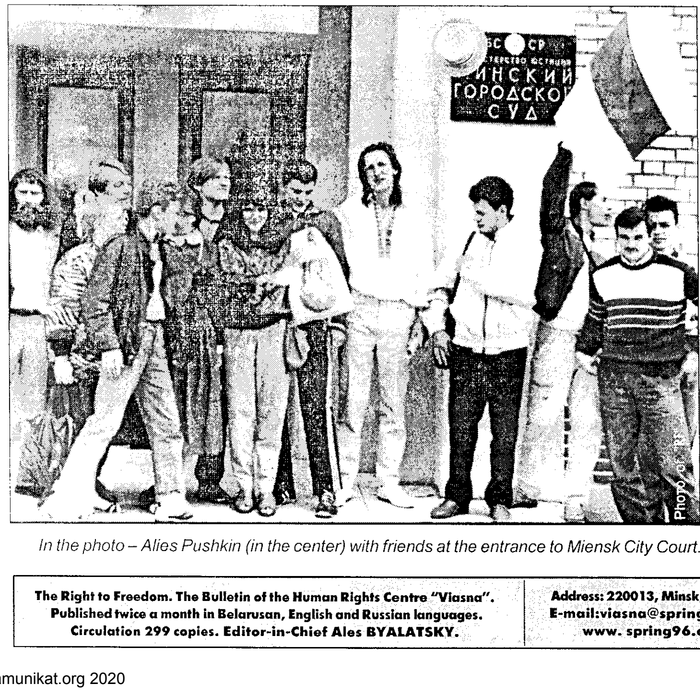
Мікола Купава, сябра Саюза мастакоў Беларусі
Аляксей Марачкін, сябра Саюза мастакоў Беларусі
Мая Кляшторная, сябра Саюза архітэктараў Беларусі
Алесь Каралёў, інжынер-канструктар

№№	Прозвішча, імя	Сума	Подпіс

Publication is prepared by Alies BIALIATSKI.

STRUGGLING AGAINST VANDALIA

THIS IS THE WAY BELARUSIAN PEOPLE TEMPERED THEIR SPIRIT IN THE PREVIOUS CENTURY…



In the photo – Alies Pushkin (in the center) with friends at the entrance to Miensk City Court.

One more fact from the recent history… March 25, 1989. Belarusian youth with the young artist Alies Pushkin took to Miensk streets in order to celebrate Freedom Day. The police violently beat participants of the procession, Alies Pushkin was detained and judged. After the events of 1988 in Kurapaty the well-known writer Alies Adamovich called Belarus Vandalia. The events that followed the arrest of the artist proved it pretty well. In the Belarusian Soviet press there was a wave of publications against the opposition-minded youth who gathered in the so called «informal organizations».

The Belarusian authorities of that time gave an unprecedented strict sentence to Alies Pushkin – 5 years of conditional imprisonment. However, as the communistic leader Mikhail Gorbachyov said, «The process has started», and nobody could stop it. The people, first of all, the youth, have inhaled the air of freedom and, exhilarated by its freshness, were ready to struggle against the clay-feet colossus, the Soviet dictatorship…

They won.

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In this number photos from the Centre "Viasna" archives are used.